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ABSTRACT

The third in a series of international conferences on measuring quality in post-secondary education was held to design four proposed project briefs, to identify new areas of collaboration, to encourage participation in the current projects, and to promote continued dialogue and exchange on the projects. Each of four working groups addressed one of the following four projects: (1) international assessment of student learning in specific disciplines; (2) impact of quality assessment on higher education systems; (3) drop-out, retention and enrollment patterns of students; and (4) the role of peer review in evaluation and assessment. Working Group 1 suggested modifications to the project's design, determined the focus of the project as a comparison at the program level, and acknowledged the need for funding and the complexity of the work. Working Groups 2 and 3 outlined the purpose of their study, methods, and funding; and chose the participating countries. Working Group 4 planned a two stage project in which stage 1 will consist of an inventory of forms of peer review in operation in a substantial number of countries and stage 2 will investigate the legitimacy of peer review. New projects were proposed in a comparative study of graduate outcomes. Appendix 1 lists participants and their affiliation; further appendixes contain the reports from each of the working groups. (JB)

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Third International Working Conference

on the Measurement of Quality

in Post-Secondary Education

15-16 April 1992

Council for National Academic Awards

344/354 Grays Inn Road,

London WC1X 8BP,

United Kingdom

HE 026 463

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1 Introduction

1.1 Following on from the first two working conferences during which proposals for four specific research projects had been identified for collaborative work, the purpose of this, the third, international gathering was:

(a) to move the four projects forward by designing fully formed project briefs;

(b) identify new ideas/areas that people wish to pursue collaborative research on;

(c) establish interest/willingness to participate in the current projects;

(d) provide a means of continued dialogue and exchange of ideas on the four projects and any new projects;

1.2 The conference was attended by researchers from Australia, Austria, Belgium, Finland, Germany, Hong Kong, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, South Africa, Sweden, United Kingdom, and United States of America.

Each of the participants joined one of four working groups (representing the four agreed collaborative projects):

Working group 1: international assessment of student learning in specific disciplines

Working group 2: impact of quality assessment on higher education systems

Working group 3: drop-out, retention and enrolment patterns of students

Working group 4: the role of peer review in evaluation/assessment process

As the aims of working groups 1 and 4 overlapped to some extent, the two working groups were combined during the conference.

1.3 A full participants' list, including working group representation, is attached as appendix 1 to this report.

2 Reports from the four working groups

2.1 Working group 1: International assessment of student learning in specific disciplines

The basis for discussion of this working group was a project proposal which was formulated at a meeting held prior to this conference in Stockholm 26-27 March 1992. During this meeting the design and outcomes of two research projects on

international comparisons of study programmes were discussed, namely the "EQ project" undertaken jointly by CNAA, CHEPS and HIS[1], and the business administration comparative project initiated by the Swedish National Board for Universities and Colleges[2].

The working group suggested some modifications/amendments to the design of the project. These have now been incorporated into the final version of the project design which is attached as appendix 2 to this report. In addition, it was agreed to change the title of the project to *International Comparison of Study Programmes*.

The working group spent a substantial amount of time discussing the focus of the project: whether it should be directed at a comparison of study programmes, student achievements or a combination of both. It was agreed that in order to keep the project workable/realistic, the focus should remain at a comparison at the programme level.

It was acknowledged that the project, as outlined in the project design, would be a difficult and complex exercise. A major problem would be to attract sufficient funding. The costs involved in conducting such a project are substantial both because of the design and length of time it would take (approximately 18–24 months). With respect to strategies that might be adopted to raise sufficient funds, it was agreed to disseminate the outcomes of the predecessor projects (see footnote) as widely as possible. This is already under way. It was also agreed that diversified funding would be the most realistic option as no single body/sponsor was likely to be found to cover all the necessary project costs across all participating countries. It was agreed not to actively pursue funding at the present time but to await expressions of interest from potential funders following the dissemination of the results of the existing comparative projects. However, the members of the working group would be mindful of funding possibilities in their own countries and with supra-national bodies. Some developments on which the project might "piggy back" were highlighted but no concrete results can be shown.

2.2 Working group 2: Impact of quality assessment, audit or assurance

A draft research proposal, based on discussions at this conference, is attached as appendix 3.

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[1] John Brennan, Leo Goedegebuure, Tarla Shah, Don Westerheijden and Peter Weusthof, Towards a Methodology for Comparative Quality Assessment in European Higher Education: A Pilot Study on Economics in Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, London/Enschede, CNAA/CHEPS, 1992.

[2] National Swedish Board for Universities and Colleges, *Business Administration and Economics Study Programmes in Swedish Higher Education: An International Perspective*, Stockholm, UHA, 1991, report number 18.

2.3 Working group 3: Drop-out, retention and enrolment patterns of students

A report from this working group of discussions held during the conference is attached as appendix 4. It outlines the purpose of the study, the methods and the funding. It is anticipated that a full project proposal will be completed by mid-July 1992. In the first instance the participative countries will be those represented during the conference ie Austria, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

2.4 Working group 4: the role of peer review in evaluation/assessment process

The basis of the working group's discussion was the paper on the role of peer review in the evaluation/assessment process prepared by John Brennan after the second meeting in Edinburgh (see proceedings of the second conference, pages 14-16).

A two stage project was constructed by the working group: stage 1 will consist of an inventory of forms of peer review in operation in a substantial number of countries; stage 2 will investigate the legitimacy of peer review. Appendix 5 gives details of the two stages.

3 New Projects

Comparative study of graduate outcomes

This study would be concerned with the measurement of outcomes, in the context of national goals, from having pursued a higher education programme by contacting students in, say, the last six to eight months of their study programme. The following issues would be addressed:

- duration of time taken to complete study
- students' academic and intellectual achievement
- students' achievement in technical and social skills
- students' attitude towards their school, college, university and society
- students' satisfaction with their institution

Michael Nettles would produce a paper/project proposal based on his own ideas and the discussion during the conference. Penn State (Jim Ratcliff) would take responsibility for distributing this document to the conference participants.

4 Next steps

4.1 Although it is not planned to arrange a further full conference in the near future, participants were asked to note August/September 1993 as a possibility.

4.2 Individual meetings of the project groups will be arranged separately as required by the project co-ordinators. Possible dates are:

6-9 September 1992 (Brussels)
(when the next EAIR conference is to be held)

29 October to 1 November 1992
(when the ASHE conference is to be held)

24-28 May 1993 (Montreal)
(when the International Network of the HKCAA will be holding its coference)

4.3 The co-ordinators for the projects are as follows:

International assessment of student learning in specific disciplines: Leo Goedegebuure and John Brennan

Impact of quality assessment, audit or assurance: Harold Silver and Don Westerheijden

Drop-out, retention and enrolment patterns of students: Riekele Bijleveld, Michael Nugent and Vincent Tinto

The role of peer review in the evaluation/assessment process: John Brennan and Lynn Meek

5 Secretariat Support

Responsibility for providing appropriate secretariat back-up will be on a rotating basis from now on between Penn State and CHEPS, commencing with Penn State. CHEPS will take over in May 1993.

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International Comparison of Study Programmes

Design Proposal

CHEPS
May 1992

1 Purpose

The purpose of international comparison of curricula is to establish *the effect of different higher education programmes within the same discipline on the level and breadth of knowledge and skills graduates are expected to have acquired after completion of their degree.*

The level of comparison should be the study programmes, not institutions (which often offer programmes in several disciplines), nor countries (where considerable differences exist among the individual programmes even withing a single discipline). Taking this programme angle, the national higher education system and the discipline-wide features are important boundary conditions for the individual programme.

2 Indicators

Several broad categories of indicators are possible on the knowledge and skills to be desired in graduates, most importantly:

- curriculum description and comparison;
- assessment of student (final level) work;
- comparative tests of students or graduates;
- graduates' opinions and achievements;
- employers' opinions.

The core of comparison should consist of the first two points: description and comparison of curricula and assessment of student work. Curriculum comparisons give insight into the *what*, *how much* and *how* of teaching in different study programmes (the independent variable according to the purpose). Student work gives insight into learning outcomes of the teaching offered, as well as insight into the operational norms and values in the study programme. Therefore, student work is the most important category of indicators (the dependent variable according to the purpose).

The latter two categories, graduate and employer data, are thought to be very informative additional sources, but are expected to be beyond reasonable time and resource limits.

Tests of students or graduates are deemed to be undesirable for several reasons, among them the fact that any one test would be too narrow in scope to cover a representative part of the level and breadth of skills and knowledge of students or graduates in different countries.

3 Methods

To assess the level and breadth of student work, experts are needed. Accordingly, the prime method in this project should be *peer review*. The expert assessment should be assisted by providing them with a clear *focus* for assessment, and informing them through *structured, comparable data-sets*.

3.1 Experts for the Review

The experts needed are *disciplinary* experts ('peers' from within or outside, depending on the discipline) and *'external'* experts in the area of programme structure, design, etc. (Of course, persons can have both these characteristics.) To avoid self-interest or too strong a bias towards one of the higher education programmes or systems involved in the project, experts, expecially peers, should be chosen as much as possible from other countries. For a sufficient level of knowledge about the higher education systems involved, it might be necessary to include some (other-disicplinary) experts from the countries from which programmes will be compared.

The number of experts should be around *seven* (five disciplinary peers from different specialisms/sub-disciplines and two 'external' experts), maximum *ten*. Larger groups threaten to become unworkable.

3.2 Focus for Assessment

The review should focus on *objectives, subjects, content and methods of student assessment in the study programmes*.

Objectives: What are the general objectives of higher education; what are the programme specific objectives?

Subjects: Which subjects are taught, for what duration, which proportion of the total time of study? Which subjects are examined (or otherwise involved in the final assessments of the sudent in the programme)? Focus should be on both general educational elements like communication, problem-solving, etc., and pure disciplinary elements.

Contents: To what level of knowledge or skills are the subjects taught? To what level of knowledge or skills are the subjects examined, i.e., which criteria are applied to decide whether students fail or pass?

Methods: In what way does student assessment take place (especially at the final moments of the study)? Which skills and types of knowledge are assessed?

3.3 Proceeding of Peer Review

Ideally, the expert group should have *three plenary meetings*, each lasting two days.

- To discuss the information in the data-sets with each other and with the research team;
  to identify questions to be put to the programme representatives (so that they may prepare answers).
- To discuss informally the questions, in sub-groups of two or three review panelists, posed previously with about two programme representatives each;
  to draft the outline of the report.
- To finalize the report.

If necessary, meeting three might be replaced with a written round of comments by the experts on the draft report.

For reasons of efficiency and to prevent spurious expertise feelings, *site visits* will *not* be included. Instead, representatives of the study programmes involved will be invited to an expert group meeting in order to provide the experts with additional information about the individual programme.

3.4 Preparation of Data-Sets

Previous to the peer review, and aiming at support for it, data-sets have to be prepared about the individual study programmes. These data-sets should be:

- clearly focused towards the object of comparison;
- highly and consistently structured in a way evident for the user;
- as succinct as possible.

As a general model for the data-sets, the schedule presented here is useful; data in each cell of the matrix would have to be filled according to a *checklist*. Data can be gathered by 'national' research teams for each country. One research team would have to edit the final version of the reports to ensure consistent structuring of the data. In general, the essential data, i.e., the programme-level data about the educational process, should focus on the core of the discipline. Assistance from representatives of the discipline under study in representing and summarizing the information is highly desirable.

	system	discipline	study programme
input	background		
process			***most important***
output			
context			

The data, at least at the programme level, should lead to clear 'one-liner' statements or questions for each relevant heading in the checklist, so as to focus the discussion in the peer review.

As an indication of the efforts involved in carrying out a project of the above nature, a time-schedule of some 18 to 24 months is envisaged.

DRAFT

IMPACTS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEMS

PROPOSAL FOR A RESEARCH PROJECT

1. Purpose

The purpose of the proposed project is to identify the impacts of quality assurance systems in a small group of countries, and as far as possible to explain the conditions in which such systems are successful – and by what criteria.

The United States does not have a national quality assurance system, although it has a network of quality assurance components. Apart from those within institutions or consortia of institutions, these components include ones for regional accreditation of institutions, national accreditation of professional programmes, statewide programme review procedures for public higher education institutions, state licensing requirements, and various kinds of assessment procedures. Some other countries have nationally mandated or voluntary systems. **The United Kingdom**, for example, in addition to its long-established 'external examiner' system, has, since the mid-1960s, had the government-created Council for National Academic Awards to act as the assurer of standards in non-university higher education, and from the end of the 1980s an Academic Audit Unit established by the universities' Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals. (The CNAA and the AAU are about to disappear, to be replaced by unified national quality assurance arrangements.) **The Netherlands** has separate systems of quality assurance for its universities and its institutes for higher vocational education. **The Hong Kong** Council for Academic Accreditation, established in 1990, advised on academic standards in five institutions of higher education and acts to monitor and raise standards. Other countries, including **France, Mexico, Australia, Austria, and some of the Scandinavian countries** have established, or emergent, systems for quality assurance purposes.

Under the auspices of the National Center on Postsecondary Teaching, Learning and Assessment at Pennsylvania State University, the Center for Higher Education Policy Studies at the University of Twente, The Netherlands, and the Council for National Academic Awards, London, three meetings have been held of an International Working Conference on Measures of Quality in Higher Education since 1991 (in Washington, D.C., Edinburgh and London), bringing together representatives from countries mentioned above and others, and these have discussed the possibility of developing a comparative research project into the impacts of such quality assurance systems. The present proposal is an outcome of those discussions.

2. Quality Assurance

The terminology of 'quality assurance' varies between and within countries, and the concept is sometimes equated with quality audit or quality assessment, and to some extent quality control. Quality assurance is used here to encompass all those procedures which monitor institutions' mechanisms for securing appropriate standards, including the management and delivery of programmes of study, the evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning, and the assessment of students.

The language and explicit processes of quality assurance have become a central feature of the discourse of higher education particularly in the 1980s and 1990s, as a result of pressures of various kinds from outside and within institutions and sectors of higher education. There have been, for example, persistent public demands for greater accountability, programme improvement, and more reliable measures of student performance. Institutions have sought to clarify missions and establish the means of making evaluative comparisons across programmes, institutions and time. The quality assurance mechanisms in different countries have been established in different funding and governance structures, different balances of public and private higher education, different percentages of post-secondary transition to higher education, different distributions of responsibilities amongst central and local government and quasi-government bodies, and different patterns of academic and professional qualifications. A number of countries represented at the International Working Conference have therefore undertaken, as a first step, to describe the reason, or clusters of reasons, for the establishment of their quality assurance bodies and their modes of operation, and these country descriptions are to be made available by September 1992.

Although there are major differences, therefore, amongst the quality assurance bodies under consideration, their position in the national systems of higher education, and their procedures, their common feature is the intention to have an influence on the quality of the higher education delivered by institutions and experienced by students. There are different ways of measuring or observing such influence or impact, and it is central to this project to identify these and the criteria on which they operate. The core of the project is to discover what it is possible to know about the impacts , and the ways of knowing it. An important element in a comparative study is the opportunity for national researchers to consider what they consider to be the main ways in which a quality assurance system has impact, and to examine the impacts and their original detail, but also to test out their analysis with visiting researchers from other countries. A comparative study is therefore intended to be not simply a set of parallel descriptions and analyses, but also an interwoven set of studies to highlight those aspects of the procedures and outcomes that can play a valid part in discussions in other countries, and amongst countries.

It is against this background that the financial basis for the proposal has been shaped. Within each of the countries selected funds will be sought for the conduct of the essential work in that country. For example, in The Netherlands the funds will be sought by staff of the Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies, and in the United Kingdom by staff at the Open University. The central funding sought here is to sustain the international part of the work, enabling each visiting team (of one or two

people) to visit another country or countries to share in the analysis; for further international meetings to refine the analysis and determine the priority issues; and for the purposes of communication, editing and publication. It is intended that material produced at various stages of this project will be published and disseminated, without awaiting final outcomes of the research. For example, published 'working papers' could begin with a compendium of the national quality assurance profiles already being planned and produced.

3. Project Outline

The aim of the project can be summarised as being *to explain the similarities and differences found in higher education systems in the extent to which quality assurance procedures are successful in producing anticipated effects, and in which associated unintended effects may also occur*. The **independent cluster of variables**, that is, the cluster of explanatory factors, is to be found (1) in characteristics of the quality assurance system(s), and (2) in structural and cultural aspects of the particular higher education system and its political and other contexts, including the origins and objectives of the quality assurance system.

The Quality assurance system can be seen, in quasi-experimental terms, as the 'treatment'. Since treatments are not the same in different countries the different characteristics of the particular treatment can be included in the independent cluster. To narrow the scope of the project it is proposed to focus on a group of quality assurance systems with the same object - to assess the quality of teaching and learning in higher education. Quality assurance systems specifically or primarily focused on research or institutional management would not be included, and the focus on teaching and learning would be on an area to which most attention appears to have been given in introducing official quality assurance systems in recent years. Because of differences among higher education systems the scope cannot be limited very rigorously, but as long as the primary focus of the quality assurance system is on teaching and learning it is a candidate for the proposed project.

The **dependent variables** are the impacts or effects of the quality assurance system. These can be anticipated and unanticipated, in the eyes of the initiator(s) or other key actors, ranging from the government or other national body, to the institutions themselves. Different types of effects can be distinguished, for example whether they are primary or secondary effects, and the field to which they apply, such as: faculty performance and development; student learning and attainment; programme availability, management and delivery; evaluation mechanisms; different levels of administration and management; resource availability and deployment; relationships of institutions and their sub-units to outside bodies and communities. Impacts exist on all levels of the higher education system.

An international comparative study makes it possible for a large range of observations in these connections to be made. Within a single higher education system there is often only one quality assurance system, and a study of one case cannot reveal the influence of factors that remain constant within this case, while these may, given the variety that is possible for these factors, be very important for the range of possible

values of the dependent variables. A case might therefore be made for a 'most dissimilar systems design', for that would maximise the range of the independent variables. What that will mean in practice for the proposed project will be clear only after the cluster of factors or variables that are thought to be important have been established.

For the comparative part of this project it is not important to settle in advance the question of what is the 'impact focus', though this is of the utmost importance for the constituent studies, in which it is crucial to know what are the intended effects, and to distinguish between changes resulting from the quality assurance system, and other changes. In the comparison the important aim is to find out how contextual factors and the characteristics of the quality assurance system influence it effectiveness. In policy terms, the focus is not on how quality assurance reaches it intended effects, but how it can be organized so as to be as effective as possible.

The kinds of questions to be addressed would include:-

1. Is there any effect, for example - is there any increase in the quality of teaching programmes? Is this increase a change from the level of increase when there was no quality assurance system?

2. To what extent can these effects be ascribed exclusively to the operation of the quality assurance system? What other changes in the context of the object of study may have caused these effects?

3. Which characteristics of quality assurance systems tend to be associated with which types of effects? Since peer review systems, for example, have a higher legitimacy in the academic field do they have more identifiable effects on programme content than systems based on performance indicators, which may tend to produce more 'administrative' effects? Do newly introduced quality assurance systems carry a 'halo' effect? Therefore:

4. What are the effects of the 'age' of a quality assurance system on its effectiveness:, and:

5. Which other contextual factors influence the effectiveness of quality assurance systems?

4. Procedures

The proposal is to conduct the project in two stages. In the first stage the first two questions will be addressed in selected countries. The second stage consists of the comparative study (questions 3 to 5). As a preliminary, however, as indicated above, a number of country profiles are being produced, describing the quality assurance procedures existing or emerging in a wider range of countries, and the policy and contextual origins of these systems. At an early stage of the project, therefore, it will be possible for experience of introducing and operating quality assurance, in higher

education systems to be shared with countries where quality assurance is either emerging or being contemplated.

The most useful countries for intensive study are therefore ones where a quality assurance system has been in operation for a sufficiently long period of time to make at least primary effects visible. The countries seen as most adequately fitting this description are the United States, the United Kingdom, The Netherlands, France and Australia. The final choice will depend on confirmation by the country profiles being produced, but is already clear that the first three of these will need to be included.

In comparative projects by international research teams it is common for papers on the individual cases to be prepared by one author or a small group of authors from the country concerned. The disadvantage with this procedure is that idiosyncrasies cannot be controlled for. While retaining the maximum amount of 'local' knowledge, therefore, it is proposed to have small teams of researchers from two countries working on each of the cases. The 'local' researcher or research group will keep the initiative, but be in close contact with a researcher or small research group form another country involved in the quality assurance study.

Report of Working Group 3: Drop-out, retention and enrolment patterns of students

The purpose of this study is to investigate student participation and persistence cross-nationally. It is hoped that such a comparative investigation will help researchers, administrators and higher education policy makers to gain insight into issues which span across national frontiers, manifesting themselves often quite differently in relation to structural and cultural differences. Through the elucidation of differences and similarities in persistence patterns among national systems this study intends to explore new paths of research which promise to have practical and academic value. Up until the present, international comparative literature on student persistence and participation has been scarce, if not totally absent. A study such as the one proposed here will be unique in subject, character and scope and add substantially to the theoretical and practical understanding of factors contributing to drop-out and time to degree.

The working group developed a comparative research framework to investigate student participation and persistence in postsecondary education. It was decided that a comparative analysis of student participation and persistence among higher education systems would be undertaken by first examining educational systems from the standpoint of structure and selectivity to determine the overall flow of students within the entire educational system. The second stage would be to provide an overall analysis of the higher education systems in relation to student participation and persistence. It is the primary intent of this comparative study to focus on the participation and persistence of students within first degree programmes in each country. Within the context of first degree programmes, longitudinal data of student cohorts from each country will be examined in order to construct a comparative framework.

Structure and selectivity

In order to determine where, how and when students are formally selected for postsecondary education, the education systems of each country will be examined in relation to structure and selectivity. For example, whereas in the USA selection can be an important mechanism to regulate and control the enrolment at the institutional level, any student in Germany and the Netherlands who completes an academic secondary degree is allowed to enrol in university studies. In some countries, such as Germany, formal selection occurs early in the national education system. In other countries, such as the United States, formal selection for higher education occurs much later, at the postsecondary level. Other selective factors are present at various levels, some of which are deeply rooted in the tradition of the system. The question, therefore, pertains to what built-in filters determine the number of students participating in postsecondary education in each country, thus reflecting the selectivity of the education system regarding academic education (see Clark, 1986). Secondary data sources will be used to determine the proportion and numbers of students who continue on to postsecondary education. General descriptive characteristics of the students will be listed such as age, gender and ethnic background.

Description of higher education systems

Following the description of flow of students within the education systems toward higher education, a comparative description of the higher education systems will be undertaken in

relation to student participation and persistence. Higher education systems generally house many different types of education. To provide an overall overview of each system, all possibilities of postsecondary degrees will be described in relation to structure and selectivity. In describing each system, the following factors will be taken into consideration:

- different sectors of higher education
- variants of degree possibilities
- access and selection (discussed above)
- institutional differentiation and hierarchies

Types of education

The following is a brief overview of the major degree possibilities in the countries under investigation.

1 **Germany**

The German higher education system is made up of traditional research universities (*Wissenschaftlich Hochschulen*) and vocational-oriented universities (*Fachhochschulen*). Before unification of the two Germanies, the Federal Republic of Germany had approximately 1.5 million students studying at 68 universities and 50,000 at Fachhochschulen. The primary focus of this study will be on courses at universities that award *Magister* and *Diplom* degrees, or lead to the *Staatexamen* (degrees offered by the State). Selection for admission occurs at the secondary level upon successful completion of the *Abitur* (academic high school finishing examination). Institutions therefore have no control over admissions. German higher education receives public financing and charges no fees to students.

2 **The Netherlands**

In the Netherlands the Higher Vocational sector and the 14 public universities both with four-year courses form the two sectors of higher education. The primary focus of this study will incorporate all first-tier university courses leading to the *Doctorandus, Ingenieur or Meester*. As in Germany, selection occurs at completion of the secondary finishing exam level, rather than the institutional level. Tuition fees of approximately 1500 guilders are charged to students, though every student is entitled to a basic governmental grant. Presently, there are approximately 170,000 students studying at the universities.

3 **The United States**

The unique development of higher education in the United States has seen a proliferation of a wide variety of institutional types and sizes. This range of differentiation in the United States has led to classification schemes such as the *Carnegie Classification* where, institutions categorised at one extreme of the scale grant doctorates and perform research, at the middle of the scale offer non-doctoral graduate study and at the other end of the scale offer only undergraduate degrees, some being only two-year degrees from community colleges. In addition, institutions are classified as public or private. The primary focus of this study will be on the

four-year degree. There are approximately 1200 traditional four-year institutions offering a bachelor of arts or science degree. Total FTE enrolment at four-year public and private institutions is approximately 6.8 million. Unlike Germany or the Netherlands, selection for American higher education occurs at the institutional level. Educational costs are passed on to the students through fees and tuition, which vary depending upon institutional type and need of student.

4 **Austria**

In Austria higher education is dominated by the university sector (12 public research universities). The non-university sector is small and is made up mainly of teacher-training institutions. Presently, new non-university institutions, Fachhochschulen, are under development. The formal selection of students is similar to the German system. Thirty per cent of the Austrian secondary school students finish *Gymnasium* (the academic upper secondary track) and pass the *Matura* (similar to the German Abitur). This examination serves to formally select students for entrance into the universities. Universities, therefore, do no select their own students. Unlike Germany, Austria has no centralised Numerous Clausus. Everybody who has passed the *Matura* has "open access" to higher education.

5 **Finland**

The higher education system consists of 17 "scientific" institutions plus 3 colleges of arts. Until now no vocational sector has existed. In Finland, about 90,000 students strive for the first degree, called the Masters (Licentiate in medicine). Before 1981, a non-obligatory lower degree corresponding roughly to the Anglo-Saxon bachelor's degree was available in some fields. Admission is restricted: selection takes place mainly on the basis of success on the institutional entrance examinations. About half of the eligible secondary school leavers cannot be admitted. Higher education is state owned and financed and charges no tuition fees to students. Other study-related costs are supported by small grants and state guaranteed loans for a maximum of 7 years.

6 **United Kingdom**

The United Kingdom has two main sectors of higher education, both of which are publicly funded: the universities and the polytechnics and colleges. This "binary" separation will cease in 1993 with the introduction of a single funding structure and the extension of the title of university to other institutions. Higher education courses are divided into three levels: postgraduate courses (with entry normally confined to graduates); first degree courses (mainly full-time for three to four years); and more vocationally-oriented sub-degree courses which include higher diploma and certificate qualifications (mainly part-time for two years). The polytechnics and colleges have developed missions which emphasise the provision of vocational studies at first degree level and below - and there is an emphasis on part-time and other courses designed to widen access and meet local and regional needs. In the universities the emphasis has continued to be towards full-time courses at first degree and postgraduate level, together with a broad research mission. Admission to higher education is selective, except for the Open University, and students on full-time first degree and diploma courses are entitled to a basic government grant covering tuition fees and maintenance.

In 1989 there were 1,067,000 students in British higher education; most (57%) enroled on first degree courses and a significant minority (30%) on sub-degree courses.

7 **South Africa**

The 21 South African universities are part of a system of tertiary (higher) education which also includes 16 technikons and 100 teacher training colleges. There are also 129 technical colleges which are considered to be part of the post-secondary, but not tertiary system. Some of these institutions have similar characteristics to the British polytechnics while others correspond to the American community colleges. Technikons have selective admissions, requiring a matrio (ie a passing level on a national 12 grade examination) while most universities currently require metrio exemption (specified combinations of high school subjects combined with minimum levels of performance). Universities award degrees up to the doctorate level in most subject areas, while technikons award only diplomas up to the equivalent of a "technical doctorate" (the laureatus). The teacher training colleges mainly produce primary school teachers; universities and technikons are responsible for the training of secondary school teachers. Current student enrolments are as follows: universities - 320,000; Technikons - 90,000; teacher training colleges - 75,000. In the past, higher education has been characterised by racial segregation; the situation is, however, changing rapidly due to political changes in the country.

The first academic degree

In this proposed comparative study, student participation and persistence rates will be compared and analysed within the context of the most socially important degree within each society. These degrees will be referred to in this study as "first degrees". The research group recognises the fundamental differences of the first degrees in the countries of study.

The basic characteristics of the first degree strongly reflect societal values long held in each country. Institutions in the United States, for example, have always been highly committed to student welfare and progress under the tradition of in loco parentis, whereas the German degree, on the other extreme, has been at least to some degree moulded around the Humboldtian concept of Lehr-und-Lernfreiheit (the freedom of teaching and learning). The first degrees also differ in approach and intent based on societal values. Whereas modern German professional study such as business economics has remained relatively theoretical and academic, professional studies in the United States have developed a more praxis-orientation. Further, while some first degrees such as those in the Netherlands and Germany lead to professional certification in subjects such as law, medicine and architecture, only a second, professional degree in the United States will ensure entrance into these professions. This section of the study will consist of a comparative analysis of the fundamental differences of the first degree based on the structural and philosophical elements which could have a substantial effect on the issue of student persistence.

The comparative analysis

The proposed study will examine longitudinal and similar data based on student cohorts available in each national system. The comparative analysis will examine characteristics of systems, proportion of students who complete each formal stage of education and the manner

in which issues regarding student persistence are defined within the context of each national system. Student characteristics such as age, social economic status, gender, ethnic background and high school achievement will be described for each system. It was determined that the degree of detail associated with the longitudinal data varies from country to country. In the United States, for example, the data are very detailed, whereas in other countries, such as England, they may be less comprehensive. It was, therefore, decided that it would be necessary to first examine the data from all participating countries to determine comparable characteristics. It was also determined that longitudinal and similar data is available for the following countries:

Austria	Late 1070s
Finland	1975/1985
Germany	1979
The Netherlands	1983
South Africa	1980
USA	1980
UK	1987

This study will supply policy makers and researchers a framework for understanding student participation and persistence in an international comparative context. This framework will also be useful in the development of future cross-national cohort studies for the participating countries.

Time frame

25 May 1992	Information on longitudinal data to be sent to R Bijleveld by P Maatta, P Makae, G Parry, H Pechar, K Schnitzer, and V Tinto
20 June 1992	Draft of research proposal sent to each participant by R Bijleveld
1 July 1992	Completed revisions sent back to R Bijleveld
20 July 1992	Completed proposal sent back to participants

Funding

Funding will be sought by each participant within his or her own country. In addition, overall "umbrella" funding will be sought where possible. Researchers may wish to begin funds earlier than the completed proposal deadline in July.

Working Group 4: The role of peer review in evaluation/assessment process

The working group agreed that this project will be carried out in two stages. Stage 1 will consist of an inventory of forms of peer review in operation in a substantial number of countries and stage 2 will investigate the legitimacy of peer review.

Stage 1: inventory of peer review processes

The working group concluded that the inventory should:

- be descriptive in nature;

- include peer review processes and practices in the areas of both teaching and research;

- identify peer review processes and practices at the various system levels eg national, regional, discipline, institutional;

- be based on the dimensions identified in the Brennan paper, whilst acknowledging the effect that these dimensions could be further refined.

As the costs involved with such an inventory would be relatively minor, no major problems were identified in terms of resourcing this part of the project. Possible sources of funding that were indicated include: the Dutch Ministry of Education and Science (action through CHEPS), the CNAA (action through Richard Lewis/John Brennan), and the American Council for Education (action through Elaine El-Khawas).

Commitment to this stage of the project was expressed by members of the working group. The International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education set up by the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation (HKCAA) was suggested as one of the possible in-roads to bodies actually engaged in review processes of teaching and research.

Stage 2: investigation into the legitimacy of peer review

Preliminary discussions were held to provide some reference for the design of this second phase. Although the term "legitimacy" proved to provide ample ground for discussion, it was agreed to use it as the heading for stage 2. It was suggested that:

- detailed case studies in a limited number of countries would be the best method to address the question of legitimacy of peer review;

- with a certain amount of variety included in the case studies based on the outcomes of the stage 1 inventory and certainly in terms of:

(a) peer review characterised by decisions embedded in the peer review itself, and

(b) peer review processes whereby the actual decisions are taken on the basis of the outcomes and the review but are not actually part of it.

Several suggestions were made as to the focus of the project in terms of distinguishing characteristics such as (a) the objects of peer review; (b) the authority for peer review; (c) the historical context; and (d) the existence of "competing" forms of review, which partly refer back to the possible outcomes of stage 1 of the project. Based on the discussions in the group and the preliminary work done by John Brennan, Lynn Meek and John Brennan will, together develop the above ideas into a full project proposal.